

Scripture

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EDITORIAL

The "Catholic Commentary". It will be recalled that the special copy of the *Commentary* did not reach Rome in time to enable Dom Bernard Orchard to present it to the Holy Father and that an ordinary copy was then substituted. After some unexplained delay in the postal service, the special copy finally arrived, and shortly afterwards Father Bernard received the following letter from the Vatican :

SEGRETERIA DI STATO
DI SUA SANTITÀ

Dal Vaticano, li
October 23, 1953

N. 308185

Dear Dom Orchard,

While acknowledging in the Holy Father's name the copy of *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, accompanied by a special letter from the Editorial Committee, which you offered to Him in the Audience of August 26th last, it is only now that I can also inform you of the arrival of the specially bound copy of the same volume for His Holiness.

The Sovereign Pontiff would have me convey to you, and to all those associated with you in the preparation and publication of this volume, His sentiments of paternal gratification. You set yourselves a difficult task, and succeeded in producing a most useful work for all English-speaking countries, namely, a complete scientific commentary on the entire Bible in their own language.

The book's secure theological and scriptural criteria and its serious scholarly method, the extraordinary richness of information presented in small compass, the clarity and exactitude of language, correctness of doctrine, and sound argumentation, are all qualities worthy of high praise.

No doubt, the zeal for accuracy of the Editorial Committee will not fail to make any necessary or opportune improvements in such a valuable publication, already in its second edition.

English-speaking Catholics may well rejoice at having so excellent an aid towards an increased knowledge and love of the Sacred Scriptures.

As a further token of His gratitude and appreciation, and with the prayer that this great *Commentary* may be widely diffused and carefully read, the Sovereign Pontiff imparts from His heart to you, to the members of the Editorial Committee, and to all your associates, His special Apostolic Blessing.

With sentiments of esteem, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Christ,

J. B. MONTINI
Prosecr.

EDITORIAL

South Africa's First Catholic Bible Week. We have recently received a quantity of information about the Bible Week held throughout South Africa during the week 16-23 November 1952. The Catholics took as their occasion the fifth centenary of the first printed edition of the Bible by John Gutenberg, who was of course himself a Catholic. An Instruction was sent out by the Bishops to all the Faithful and a very detailed programme was worked out at the Pius XII Catholic Centre, Mazenod Institute, Basutoland. The programme included sermons on the Bible, talks on the Bible to Catholic Societies and Biblical discussions, exhibitions, lectures, distribution of leaflets, sale of Bibles and Biblical literature. A great deal of literature was prepared at the Catholic Centre and sent out on request to the various parishes and institutes. An interesting feature of the Week was the questionnaire sent at the end giving detailed questions to be answered concerning the results of the Week. It is clearly impossible to summarise results with any accuracy, but it may be said that in many places there was a very good attendance at the lectures, conferences and exhibitions. The interest of non-Catholics naturally varied from place to place, but there is no doubt that Catholics benefited considerably. In some places success was limited by insufficient advertising or materials. In others, where the ground was better prepared, the success was solid without being sensational. At least Protestants now realise that Catholics are allowed and even encouraged to read the Bible and that they first printed it. A feature of the Week was the campaign for its success—a success, let us note, which in the nature of things cannot be measured in figures. Besides the prayer, those responsible for the organising of the Week went to enormous trouble to prepare literature, e.g. plans for sermons, order-forms for books, plans for conferences, detailed lists of questions for discussion, posters, illustrated and otherwise, suggestions for exhibitions. The profusion of printed matter was astonishing. Furthermore, the Catholic papers issued special Bible Week numbers exclusively devoted to Biblical subjects. We feel sure that a work so well organised cannot fail to leave lasting results.

Annual General Meeting. As announced in our October number, this will take place at the Newman Centre, 31 Portman Square, London W1, on Thursday 7 January 1954 at 6 p.m. After the business meeting, Rev. Dr Fuller will read a paper entitled "The Trial of Jesus Christ"

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

A simple and satisfactory explanation of the inspiration of Sacred Scripture is given by the Church when she teaches the faithful that God uses the sacred author as His instrument. This has been the central theme of those whose duty it was to speak of "the inspired word of God", from the earliest Fathers to the present supreme Pontiff. The author of the *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, of the time of St Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 150) used a comparison which in one form or another was to become a commonplace : The sacred authors "had no need of literary artifice, they had not to engage in controversy or polemic [with each other] ; they had only to lend themselves completely to the operation of the Holy Spirit, so that that divine quill, coming down from heaven, might use just men like a sort of musical instrument, lyre or zither, and so open to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly things". Soon after, Athenagoras speaks of the Spirit "using" the sacred writers, "as if a flute-player were blowing on his flute". At times authors like St Augustine, speaking of these "letters sent us from our heavenly fatherland", point more specifically to the activity of the human instrument when they say that God "dictated" : "When they [the sacred authors] wrote what God showed and said, no-one may deny that He Himself wrote, since His members worked out what they had learned as their Head dictated". St Thomas is precise and clear : "The Holy Ghost is the author, the man is the instrument" (*Quodlibetum* vii.xvi) ; "Our faith lays it down that Sacred Scripture was given to the world by the Holy Spirit who dictated it (*Spiritu Sancto dictante*)". Following the same line of thought, and giving it his sanction, the present Pope stated in the Encyclical *Divino afflante* that the basis and norm of theologians' discussions has been the truth that "the hagiographer when writing his sacred book is the organon or instrument of the Holy Spirit". Clearly, both in the patristic *kerygma* and the theological studium the notion of instrument has been central. It appears as the universally accessible notion from which one may proceed to illustrate the less apparent. Everyone knows what an instrument is and from this all can learn what inspiration is.

One is therefore astonished to find "instrumentality" treated in the works of recent writers on inspiration not as the key to a puzzle, but as a puzzle to which a key must be sought. The article "Inspiration" in the Supplement to the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, which has been generally and rightly greeted as a good exposition of the

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present-day thought of many Catholic theologians on the subject, is particularly fitted to exemplify an approach which many must find somewhat disconcerting. The author, R. P. Courtade, having excluded the "natural concursus" by which God imparts motion to secondary causes acting in their own sphere, approaches inspiration by discussing God's use of certain material agents to produce results beyond their natural power. God, he says, determines to use creatures, in certain circumstances, to accomplish works which surpass their power. In such cases He is not content with according them that general motion (*concours général*) which all secondary causes stand in need of. By means of a special movement, at the moment that He makes them act, He *elevates* their action to a preternatural or supernatural order. The role they then play is exclusively instrumental. By means of water, God healed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy long ago. By means of water, He cleansed us from original sin. In these cases, the water was in no wise the principal cause of the effect produced. We are already within the "domain of mystery"—because the motion imparted by the divine artisan is not mechanical or local but something that penetrates the instruments "*jusqu'au plus intime*".¹

We need not yet ask is the comparison of inspiration with the working of miracles or the production of sanctifying grace legitimate. The author does not insist on it ; he uses it merely to build up the proper atmosphere of awe in which the analysis of instrumental causality in inspiration is to be approached. "We come now to the sacred writers. Here the instrument which God uses is no longer a thing, it is a person. And it is as a person that God uses him, in virtue of his intelligence and his free will. The mystery thickens before our eyes". The reason indicated for this double inspissation is that we know what it is for one man to make use of another as his minister, his spokesman, his servant. "But to take a man as an instrument in the strict sense of the word—this power belongs to God, and to Him alone". There is excuse here for returning to a problem still open to discussion if the best that can be said of it so far is that we are in the domain of mystery, a mystery which gets darker the deeper we go in. Must we remain in this philosophical gloom, or may cheerfulness break in ?

The question may be restated in traditional terms. What is the peculiar nature of the action of God on the sacred writer which reduces him, so to speak, to an instrument ? It is not the natural concurrence of God with his faculties, for otherwise God would be author of all books. It is not the supernatural concurrence of actual grace, for otherwise God would be the author of all books so written :

¹ *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplement, VOL. IV, col. 512.*

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and we may assume that many pious books for which the saints begged the light of grace have in fact been written under the constant influence of efficacious graces. It would be hard to think, for instance, that the Supreme Pontiffs, when defining a dogma, did not write under the impulse of efficacious grace, which determined them freely and infallibly to fix in their minds what God wanted. And we know that God's assistance was there to ensure that it was aptly expressed. The conclusion suggests itself that there must be a *third* kind of divine concurrence, neither natural nor supernatural in the ordinarily known sense, to make the subject God's instrument. P. Courtade looks for it in the region of the mysterious : something on the lines of the action of God on the waters of baptism. One disadvantage would be that such an explanation would be *obscurum per obscurius*; another, and more telling, that it does not seem to be in keeping with the ancient patristic and ecclesiastical tradition, which looked to the notion "instrument" for light, not darkness.

An easy way out would be to appeal to everyday life, in some such way as this. Everyone would call a man the instrument of an author, if the man wrote what the author determined, under the compulsion, the control, the assistance and inspection of the author, and if the author signed his name to the joint production. Now it can be said that God determines what the sacred writer sets down when He directs his attention infallibly to the ideas He wishes. He impels the sacred writer's will, as efficaciously—to say the least—as any command can move an inferior. He watches over the execution, to ensure that it aptly expresses what He wants. And finally, by handing over the books to the Church as inspired, He seals them with His name and proclaims them as His word. This is, element by element, the description of inspiration in the Vatican Council and the great biblical encyclicals, and is too well known to need exposition here: except that the presentation of the books to the Church, with the revelation of their being inspired, must be noted as integral to the notion of inspiration: "*atque ut tales ipsi Ecclesiae traditae sunt*" (Denzinger, No. 1787). But this explanation works from the elements of inspiration to describe instrumentality: it does not precisely start from "instrument" to reach the notion of inspiration.

Father A. Bea (*De inspiratione*, p. 41) notices one difficulty in applying the notion of instrument to the inspired author. It is that "we have not a straightforward instance of instrumentality, where the action is not attributed to the instrument, but to the principal agent, just as the bench is not said to be the work of the saw but of the carpenter"—appealing to St Thomas, *De veritate* XII.viii, 5 and *Summa* III, xiii.iii. "For the sacred writers are and are always said to be truly

authors". This difficulty however is not serious, because, as Suarez remarks (*In Metaphys.* xvii.7), the principle that "the action is not attributed to the instrument" is valid at best of mechanical or artificial instruments : it does not hold good for rational instruments. "For we rightly say that men do absolve, consecrate, etc., by reason of a certain sovereignty which men exercise in these acts as masters of their actions". It will be noticed that human instrumentality seems inclined to shift easily into the region of the mysterious ! But the consideration is sufficient to show that the fact that the sacred writers are called authors does not prevent their being instruments.

Another difficulty brings us closer to the kernel of the problem. It has been urged that where the instrumental cause is rational, the liberty of the agent must be taken into account. An irrational instrument is always moved *physically* by the principal cause, but a rational instrument can be moved physically only by God if his liberty is to be left intact. In other cases he is moved only by moral influences, such as command, persuasion, suggestion. But in every case, in so far as he is free, he finally is himself the efficacious cause of his being determined to act. And this seems to run counter to the notion of instrument, because in so far as any cause is an instrument, it is said to work "only in so far as it is impelled by the principal cause". Not only does the perennial question recur—how to reconcile the efficacious impulse of grace with the freedom of man (but from this we may safely prescind). Whether, with one school of thought, it is explained by physical premention and predetermination, or with another by the *scientia media*, the problem of inspiration remains : why is the agent an instrument in the one case, and not in the other ?). The other question arises, how can a free cause—which takes the initiative—be an instrumental cause ?

The answer to this seems to be that a certain independence is not contrary to the nature of the instrument. If the precise reason of instrumentality was that the agent was moved by another, then every cause under God would be an instrument ("quidquid movetur, ab alio movetur"), and every agent in the world is moved by God. But we do not ordinarily, even in philosophy, say that everything is an instrument in the hands of God : least of all would we say, for instance, that when a man sees, God sees primarily through him. It is perfectly true that every instrument is moved by another agent, and a mechanical instrument *only* by another agent. But if the case arises that an instrument is *also* moved by itself, it does not cease thereby to be an instrument, because what is lacking—to be moved *solely* by another—is a property not confined to an instrument. Nothing distinctive or essential to the instrument is absent when it is under

some aspect independent. A man is still a man when he has no legs : because other things beside man have legs. But he would not be a man if he had no soul, and so we are invited to ask what is the precise essence, the *sine qua non*, of inspiration. In the meantime it may be assumed that the difficulty or mystery involved in man's freedom does not really touch his instrumentality and may be omitted from consideration.

We have, happily, nothing novel to bring in to explain the true nature of an instrument. St Thomas, *Summa*, III, LXXVII.iii, 3 ; or LXXIX.ii, 3 can be taken as the *locus classicus*, to which most treatises on inspiration have recourse. What makes something an instrument is that when set in motion by the principal agent it produces an *effectus potior* : a result of which it was itself incapable, but which it now produces by virtue of the force lent it by the higher power. Hence the commonplace that the natural activity of the instrument is "elevated" to an order beyond itself, as has been the common opinion of scholastic doctors : P. de Courtade appeals to Gonet, *Clypeus*, v, III.iii, 4 ; Goudin, *Phys.* I, II, IV.v. We add, to show that there is no ill-feeling between the schools on this point, Suarez, *In Metaphys.*, XVII.16 ff. For him likewise the instrumental cause is that which concurs or is elevated to produce an effect "*nobilior se*", that is, "something beyond the measure of its own perfection and action". He notes, with St Thomas, that the instrument puts forth its own force. St Thomas : "Instrumentum non perficit instrumentalem actionem nisi exercendo propriam" (III, LXII.i-II). Suarez : "Operatur quidem [instrumentum] in virtute superioris agentis, sed indiget aliqua virtute propria, alias non posset a tali re ulla actio prodire". But whatever the contribution of the instrument, it is not adequately proportionate to the effect, it is insufficient, and it has power to produce the effect only according to the measure of force imparted to it by the higher agent. Hence Suarez concludes, in a formula which lends itself very well to the discussion of inspiration, that the motion (*concurrus*) in question is not owed to the instrument in its own right, or for its own sake ; it is due only to the principal agent. "*Non instrumento proprie vel propter se debetur talis concursus*".

Because therefore the instrument is used for something beyond its own scope ("ad effectum potiorem, . . . nobiliorem") what happens to it is not for its own sake or perfection. This is the analysis of the schools, and we cannot find fault with it. One simple consideration may be invoked to justify it further, if necessary. A thing is used, and is therefore an instrument, not just one in a series of co-ordinated causes, when it is subordinated to an end beyond itself. This rejoins the ordinary notion of a human instrument. We say someone has

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been "used", "made a tool of", when he has been made to exert himself not for his own advantage, but for the benefit of someone else. We may therefore say that we have an instrument at work wherever an agent is set in motion not for its own sake but for the sake of another. And when an agent is applied to an action which is not sought for the perfection of that agent itself, the agent is at once subordinated to the effect. It is reduced to the status of a means for the simple reason that it is not treated as an end. In such cases, the effect must be allowed to be *potior, nobilior*, as the scholastic doctrine requires, and this is true even where the effect is within the power of the agent in the natural order. A man can make money anyway. But if he has been exploited to make money for another, the effect has been treated as better than the agent, at least in the eyes of the principal cause. The scholastic doctrine of instrumental causality, as summarised above, can obviously be applied to inspiration, for this is traditionally and authentically a "charismatic" influence. It is a *gratia gratis data, not gratum faciens*, as the general doctrine has it.

When, therefore, we say that the effect of an instrumental cause is something to which the instrument was of itself unequal, we must remember that the disparity or excess, so to speak, in the effect must be understood primarily of the order of dignity, value. The "plus" in the result need not be in the physical order. Instrumentality is there if the effect be in some way superior to the immediate agent. And this seems to us to be most important for inspiration, because if an effect beyond the natural powers of man is looked for in inspiration, it becomes, it seems, impossible to verify instrumentality there. For inspiration is essentially the same in every line of the Bible—including the *obiter dicta*, as has been put beyond question by the Encyclical *Divino afflante*. And if we take a standard *obiter dictum*, "Bring me the cloak which I left with Carpus in Troad" (II Tim. iv.13), we shall ask ourselves in vain how such a sentence requires any "mysterious" elevation of the powers of St Paul.

How is such a sentence "*potior*" or "*nobilior*" than the natural powers ("*propria virtus*") of St Paul? The "elevation" of his powers by actual (salutary) grace can hardly be said to be demanded for such a sentence. Actual grace is not required, but neither would it be enough to give inspiration, because the Church refuses to call books written under the elevation of actual grace inspired in the sense of sacred and canonical. Is the "elevation" of his powers by the preternatural force given to a miracle-worker required? "I left my cloak in Troad" is not a piece of miraculous wisdom or a preternatural feat of memory! It is obviously something that could be said by anyone using his natural powers, and hence the comparison of inspiration with

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the waters that healed leprosy, etc., seems uncalled for. Undoubtedly St Paul's intellect was illuminated by a preternatural impulse to form the judgment, otherwise it would not be inspired. But the question precisely is, where does this preternatural element act?

The answer commonly given is that when treating such accessible matters and facts of memory the inspired author judges of the natural truth in question by means of "a divine light". He contemplates them "*secundum divinam veritatem*", "*secundum certitudinem divinam*", for which St Thomas, 2-II, CLXXI, vi; CLXXIV, ii, iii is constantly cited. So P. Courtade (*Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Suppl., vol. IV, col. 514): God can accord our understanding a vigour, a sharpness, a clear-sightedness of a superior kind ("une vigueur, une acuité, une perspicacité supérieures"). This is precisely what He does for the hagiographers. Courtade adds more references to St Thomas to reinforce the statement. We beg leave to doubt that this is precisely what God does, or that the opinion of St Thomas can be adduced for it.

In what intelligible sense can it be said that St Paul made the judgment "I left my cloak in Troad" with a preternatural vigour, sharpness, clear-sightedness? Had he a better and clearer view on the subject of the cloak than his companions? To say he remembered it better is gratuitous. Are we perhaps to think that he had a divine light on the nature of the cloak, like a Platonic view of the form of a cloak? Did he understand better than his companions what a cloak was? All attempts to give sense to the judgment "*secundum divinam veritatem*" on the cloak lead nowhere, at least on this road. And as for St Thomas, it can only be regretted that the Doctor Communis is made once more to say something which, as far as can be seen, he never dreamt of. In all the passages so frequently cited in this connexion St Thomas is speaking of judgments formed not under the light of inspiration, but under the light of revelation. And the day is surely gone by when revelation and inspiration can be confused! Undoubtedly St Thomas insists on the "divine certainty" with which the prophet judges even natural truths, but he is talking of the transmission of revelation as such, where the prophet has the consciousness that God is speaking to him. Any standard scholastic treatise on revelation explains that there are two judgments in revelation, both produced by God in the mind of the subject. One judgment may be represented as "this is so", the second as "God says this to me"; and it is the latter that gives the mind divine certainty. Except in the probably rare cases where the sacred writer was conscious of his inspiration, the latter judgment, "God says this to me", is absent in inspiration and hence there is no reason to say that the sacred writer judges what he writes with a divine certainty, "a preternatural vigour of mind".

St Thomas does not treat inspiration expressly in the passages from which the tessera “*judicat secundum divinam certitudinem*” is taken, and therefore cannot be invoked to decide the case. He does speak of judgments formed “*sub instinctu prophetico*” where the prophet is not sure of himself: we may hazard the guess that if the precise question of the mind of the hagiographer had come up, St Thomas would have treated it under the heading of a prophetic instinct—2-II, CLXXI.V; CLXXIII.IV—rather than of divine certitude.

We conclude then that it is unsound to appeal to a “divine” light in the mind of the sacred writer to assign to inspiration an effect to which the author was unequal and for which therefore an “elevation” was required. We have excluded the simple light of grace, and we have excluded the light of miraculous insight. What then is the “*potior*” or “*nobler*” result of inspiration? It seems to be simply this: since an agent is an instrument if he is impelled to action not for his own benefit or perfection but for the sake of another, the hagiographer becomes an instrument under any concursus which is given him not for his own sake but for the sake of the kingdom of God. Since he is impelled to write not for his private personal perfection but for the public common good, he is no longer an end but a means, and therefore the result must be considered as higher and nobler than himself, since the means is always of a lower order than the end. God uses him, and thereby elevates him, to produce an effect which God puts first.

If God then gives actual efficacious and salutary grace to a sacred author, which must have been ordinarily the case, since presumably the author merited by writing inspired books, the primary end of this grace was not the personal progress of the writer but the good of the Church. That the grace also perfected the author was merely concomitant, not primarily intended, and in so far as the author used the grace for his own good, he was not in this respect inspired. He was inspired because “*per se*” the grace subordinated him to the public good, “*per accidens*” did him good.

The public good for which provision was thus made was in fact attained when the book in question was “handed to the Church as inspired” (Vatican Council), or, to put it another way, when its inspiration became known. And therefore the grace of inspiration, no different presumably from any actual efficacious grace, was given in view of the subsequent revelation, to be made to the Church, of the giving of this grace. That is how an inspired book differs essentially from the solemn writings of a Council or Pope: since no public revelation is given after the death of the last apostle, the positive help given possibly by God for the writing of a solemn definition is not

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given in view of a subsequent revelation of its existence : so there can be no more inspired books. We come back therefore to the difference between inspiration and actual grace which is the standard doctrine : inspiration differs from actual grace by its end and object (*cf.* Bea, *De inspiratione*, p. 38). The end and object of inspiration is the public good primarily : and hence the sacred author is the instrument when he receives such a grace. His own good is only secondary. The end and object of actual grace is primarily the private good of the individual who receives it. The public good, also inevitably involved, is secondary, and hence the subject is not an instrument. The sacred author is therefore the instrument to an end nobler than himself—the word of God—not just because he is enlightened, impelled and assisted by God, but because he is enlightened, impelled and assisted for the sake of something outside and beyond himself, the building up of the body of Christ. And this public good is assured not so much by the content of his writings—there may well be as much and more in the definitions of the Councils—as by the divine seal of God's good pleasure set upon them when He handed them to the Church as inspired and thereby guaranteed them, as He did no other books, as “useful for teaching, refuting, instruction and correction”. The books are therefore only really sacred and living in the stream of the life of the Church : hence the importance of that element of the Vatican's description of inspiration to which we called attention at the beginning : the Scriptures are sacred because they have been inspired by the Holy Ghost—and handed to the Church as such. For their actual production, there is no need to look for mysterious miracles of the type of the physical causality of the sacraments. The primary miracle of the books—apart from the revelation which they actually contain but which is not of the essence of inspiration—is the apostolic revelation of the fact that God gave “ordinary” actual grace to produce them : but such a revelation is no ordinary thing, and will never occur again.

K. SMYTH, S.J.

Milltown Park, Dublin

ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS¹

The converts of the Apostle St Thomas are believed to have received the Syrian rite and liturgy from the Apostle himself. Historians will search in vain for any trace of Latin rite in Malabar before the thirteenth century, apart from occasional visitors from other countries. It is not surprising therefore that in all early writings the term "St Thomas Christians" is used to denote Syrian Christians. This latter term is however a misnomer, for many a foreigner unaware of the circumstances in Malabar might think that the Christians of Malabar are immigrants from Syria. Though Irish Franciscan missionaries began to evangelise in Malabar in the thirteenth century, the St Thomas Christians continued to follow the Syrian rite and they were governed by Syrian Bishops from the Patriarchate of Seleucia Ctesiphon.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in the beginning of the sixteenth century, a change set in. The St Thomas Christians were slowly made to pass from the jurisdiction of Syrian Catholic Bishops to that of Portuguese Bishops. The Synod of Diampur was convoked in 1599 by Archbishop Menezes of Goa to bring the St Thomas Christians under the Portuguese, on the grounds of bringing over the Nestorians of Malabar to the Catholic Faith. On these grounds, that the Syrian Christians were tainted by Nestorianism, a policy of Latinisation was begun which in fact was the cause of the great schism of 1653 involving the separation of nearly a third of the Catholic population from communion with the true church.

The Malabar Christians used the Nestorian form of Syriac and that seems to be the chief reason why some western scholars called them Nestorians. The Malabar tradition is definitely at variance with western scholarship in this matter and yet even in these days some western scholars continue to brand our forefathers as Nestorians. Such scholars do no good to the dissemination of truth while they do a lot of harm to the cause of reunion in Malabar. For the dissidents cite the western scholars and argue that to go back to Catholic communion is to depart from the faith of their fathers ; whereas the truth is that till the great schism of 1653 Malabar Christians *en bloc* were in

¹ [In our issue for April 1953 we published an article on the Christians of South India, in the concluding paragraph of which some rather critical remarks appeared about the St Thomas Christians. We learn that these remarks are without foundation and that they have caused pain to numbers of readers over there. We accordingly express our deep regret at having published such statements (even if largely through inadvertence) and at having caused any distress. Here we publish an article which may help to give a more balanced view of the subject.—ED.]

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communion with the Holy See. In manuscript copies of the Missal in use, there may have been Nestorian interpolations which the amanuenses unwittingly copied ; but if there were, it is curious that there is not even a single copy of such a Missal extant. The fact that the Malabar clergy and people readily submitted to the Latin Bishops at the Synod of Diampur, the fact that the clergy of Malabar said Mass together with the Portuguese missionaries from the very inception of the Synod and that for fifty years the St Thomas Christians remained loyal to the Portuguese bishops are sufficient evidence that the St Thomas Christians were Roman Catholics all through history.

It was the policy of latinisation that offended the Malabar clergy and people, who were unaccustomed to Latin liturgical customs and Latin language. The Portuguese lured a few Syrians to the Latin rite, but the great majority of the St Thomas Christians continued to follow the Syrian rite. In the Briefs of the Roman Pontiffs, the Syrian Christians of Malabar were repeatedly called St Thomas Christians. The Brief *Romani Pontifices*, erecting the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy and dated 21 December 1923, is a luminous example.

As in all places, people of different outlook will have differences of opinion, but it is a travesty of the truth to say that Syrian Christians look down upon Latin Christians. Even if the Syrian Christians were so unchristian as to be inclined that way, it is not possible in practice to do so. First because some of the Latin Christians are latinised Syrians, and moreover the Latin Community has the backing of the whole Latin Rite all over the world. Furthermore, in Malabar the Latin Christians have a large number of Catholic institutions which are on a par with our own institutions. Of course, some Syrian Christian families claim that their forefathers were high-caste Hindus. But this sense of class-distinction is not the monopoly of the Syrian Christians. Though inter-marriages between Syrian and Latin Christians are rare, there are certain groups of Latin Christians between which marriages are even more rare. The readiness with which large numbers of Syrian Christian young men pass over to the Latin rite to work in the Latin dioceses of India is clear proof of their broad-mindedness. The emigrants and missionaries from our community fall under Latin jurisdiction and in some cases *de facto* into the Latin rite when they go out of Malabar, and so they only swell the ranks of the Latin community. On the other hand, Latin Christians can always fall back upon the fame of the Latin rite in the universal Church even if they fail to command fame locally. The state of the St Thomas Christians of the Catholic communion can be briefly given in the words of the "Servizio Informazioni della Chiese Orientale" dated 30 April 1953 (slightly summarised) :

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"The Syro-Malabarese are the Catholics of Central Malabar who are generally called St Thomas Christians. According to a living tradition of the place, the church is apostolic and is founded by the Apostle, St Thomas. Ecclesiastically, Malabar has three religious communities : Syro-Malabarese, Latin Christians and Syro-Malankarese. These latter form an ecclesiastical unit with a hierarchy of its own founded in 1931 when two Jacobite Bishops with a number of priests and laymen were reunited with Rome.

"The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabarese consists of the Archbishop of Ernakulam and his suffragan Bishops at Trichur, Changanacherry, Kottayam and Palai. This province extends all over central Malabar and coincides with the Syro-Malankara diocese of Tiruvalla, suffragan to the Metropolitan See of Trivandrum. This Archdiocese of the Syro-Malankara rite coincides with the whole of south Malabar.

"The territory of the Syro-Malabarese is also the territory of four Latin dioceses. Thus in Central Malabar there are three rites and in some places jurisdiction of four to five Bishops".

Owing to the density of population in Central Malabar, more than 50,000 Syrian Catholics have immigrated into the Latin Diocese of Calicut. Since the Latin priests are too few to look after the immigrants, Syrian priests, regular and secular, are working under the Latin Bishop of Calicut to look after the Syrian immigrants. The report ends with these momentous words : "The Oriental church of the Syro-Malabarese seems to be at the present moment the most flourishing in India in its Catholic and missionary enterprises".

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THE CHURCH AND THE WYCLIFITE BIBLE

The Council of Oxford (1408) published a Constitution forbidding anybody to publish or even have privately any unauthorised translation of Scripture made in the time of Wyclif or after. From which it is clear that the Council did not forbid *all* English translations. The decree was misunderstood, however, from the start, and St Thomas More complains about this in his *Dialogues* (*cf.* Pope, *Aids to the Bible*, p. 251). The reason for the decree is fairly plain. Evidently false translations were in circulation in Wyclif's time, hence the proviso inserted in the decree. Translations made before that time are in no way forbidden. All the decree insists on therefore is proper authorisation. And this is no more than the Church might do at any period of history, with the exception of the rather severe stricture on private possession of unauthorised copies. The celebrated canonist Lyndwode makes it clear that the above interpretation is how it was understood at the time. He says that the prohibition does not extend to translations made before Wyclif's time, and he assigns the following reason why more recent translations must be approved by authority : "Although it be the plain text of Scripture that is translated, yet the translator may err in his translation, or if he compose a booklet or tract he may, as in fact frequently happens, intermingle false and erroneous teaching with the truth". St Thomas More takes the same view (*cf.* Gasquet, *The Old English Bible*, p. 124) : "I trow", he says, "that in this law you see nothing unreasonable. For it neither forbiddeth the translations to be read that were already well done of old before Wyclif's days, nor dammeth his because it was new, but because it was naught, nor prohibiteth new to be made, but provideth that they shall not be read if they be made amiss, till they be by good examination amended".

Were the Lollards persecuted for reading or having the Scriptures ? The articles on which they were examined are well known and are in a manuscript in the British Museum. There are thirty-four points of faith and morals. English translations of Scripture are not even mentioned. In the accounts of the examinations of the Lollards (Wyclifites) and their recantations, Gasquet says he has found only two references to Scripture translations in English. One thing seems clear from all this. The spreading of the Bible in English was never a chief aim of the Lollards, nor were they persecuted for having them. It is true that the Bible of a Lollard called Hun was burnt by the

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Church authorities, but this was because there was a preface attached to it which contained heretical views on the Blessed Sacrament. There are few copies of this preface or prologue now extant but it may still be read in the large edition of the Wyclifite Bible by Forshall and Madden. The heresy is plain there for all to see. Moreover this is the explanation already given long ago by St Thomas More (*cf.* Pope, *Aids to the Bible*, p. 252).

An examination of the Wyclifite Bibles shows that they are quite orthodox apart from that prologue. Many of the manuscripts are large and finely made; many of them belonged to the nobility and even royalty, e.g. Henry VI and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. These facts do not agree very well with the theory that the Lollards were persecuted for having them. In themselves there was nothing to connect them with Wyclif, so long as the prologue was omitted, and no doubt as time passed, many, including royal, owners had no suspicion of any such connexion.

Kenyon, in the earlier editions of *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, has said "There is no doubt that the Lollards . . . were persecuted, but it does not appear that the possession, use or manufacture of an English version of the Bible, was one of the charges specially urged against them . . . one is glad that it should be so". Unfortunately, in later editions, Kenyon abandons this fair estimate.

Was Wyclif's the first complete English Bible? In dealing with this question, some Catholics are not always very logical. After spending a long time proving that there was really no need for English translations, they then strain every nerve to show that Wyclif's was not the first. What are the facts? It is very likely that in the fourteenth century clerical learning was at a low ebb, and knowledge of Latin was scanty. The chief need was to learn Latin. But we may admit that an English translation of Scripture would have come in very useful. Parts were already in English; we may be fairly certain that whether Wyclif translated the Bible or not, there would have been one before long in any case as the knowledge of Latin declined. That one had not appeared before could be explained perhaps by the fact that English was only just beginning to assert itself as a language and to oust French. The rise of a need for an English translation was gradual. The Wyclifites of course had a great need of a translation so that by private interpretation they might defend their views. They wished to set the authority of Scripture privately interpreted over against the authority of the Church.

Till recently it was commonly accepted that Wyclif made the first complete English translation, though many non-Catholics freely admit our contention, stated above, that one would have been made anyway

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about that time, even if Wyclif had not done so, and that one could hardly have been made earlier since English as a language hardly existed. (By "Wyclif" we mean also his followers, because it is very doubtful how much Wyclif himself did, if indeed he did any.) But the point is whether the Wyclifite Bible was first. There can scarcely be any doubt that the first version is Wyclifite because of the reference to Nicholas de Hereford, a well-known Wyclifite, at the end of Bar. iii.20. What of the later version? We saw that there are many more manuscripts of this extant. It has a long prologue, which is a Lollard tract, criticising the clergy and containing various heresies, especially against the Blessed Sacrament. If the author of the prologue also made the Bible translation then the Bible is Wyclifite. Now, the English of the later version corresponds closely to the principles of translation set out in the general prologue. Again, certain Bible passages quoted in the prologue correspond almost exactly to the wording of the later version. We may perhaps conclude that they are by the same person. That would mean that the "later version" is Wyclifite, as well as the earlier. It is true that few manuscripts of the later version actually have the prologue attached, but the reason is not far to seek. Since it was heretical it would not be allowed to survive, except perhaps by accident. The Bibles could only freely circulate without it.

We know from external evidence that the Lollards had a Bible. The decree of the Council of Oxford makes this clear, though some try to show that it only refers to texts and not to whole Bibles. Either view is arguable. However, Archbishop Arundel, writing to the Pope, says that "Wyclif tried by every means in his power to undermine the very faith and teaching of Holy Church, filling up the measure of his malice by devising the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures in the mother tongue". John Foxe tells us that in the time of Richard II there was a proposal to make a new translation of the Bible into English to take the place of an unauthorised one. The proposal was rejected, but it does testify to the existence of what can hardly be anything else but the Wyclifite Bible. None of Wyclif's contemporaries who speak of Bible translations knows of the existence of any other, and when looking for precedents to justify their own they are forced to quote the example of the French: "As lords of England have the Bible in French so it were not against reason that they hadden the same sentence in English. . . ." This could hardly have been written if in fact there did exist at the time an English Bible (*cf.* J. F. H. Tregear, "The First English Bible", in *Clergy Review*, March and May, 1947).

In 1894, Cardinal Gasquet, writing in the *Dublin Review* (July 1894),

proposed the startling new theory that the two versions which we know as Wyclifite are not in fact such, but Catholic versions made before Wyclif. Unfortunately his thesis appears to be largely based on an error. He mentions Hun's Bible (see above) which he admits to be a Lollard Bible, and quotes Thomas More about the heresy contained in its prologue. But, he says, this must have been different from the so-called second Wyclifite version, because we shall look in vain in the edition of Wyclifite Scriptures published by Forshall and Madden for any trace of these errors (*cf. The Old English Bible*, p. 129). As we have already stated, however, the heresy is plain for all to see in the Forshall and Madden edition.

Gasquet goes on to argue that the prologue and the Bible translations are by the same hand. "There is no room for doubt", he says. But, if so, then it is quite certain that the Bible is Wyclifite and not Catholic.

Father Thurston, s.j. tried to save something from the wreck by suggesting that the earlier Wyclifite Bible may well be a Catholic one, since it is not by the author of the prologue. But he unaccountably overlooks the connexion of *both* versions with the prologue, and (still more curiously) the explicit assertion at the end of Bar. III.20 that Nicholas de Hereford made the translation—a man well known as a follower of Wyclif. It seems therefore that the Bibles now called Wyclifite are really such—they are orthodox in content, but the second version has a heretical prologue attached. Further, there is no evidence, so far as contemporaries are concerned, of any earlier English translations of the whole Bible, though there were translations of many parts.

The chief difficulty against this conclusion is the evidence of St Thomas More, who not only asserts that there were good Catholic Bibles in English before Wyclif, but that he had actually seen them. Further, he thought Wyclif's translation itself heretical (*Dialogue concerning Tyndale*, BK.III, ch.14), and hence condemned by the Council of Oxford. But he was writing over a hundred years after the Council, and he appears to be mistaken in thinking that the Council condemned the Wyclifite Bible as heretical. It seems probable that this error led him to conclude that the Bibles circulating in his day could not therefore be Wyclifite because they were orthodox translations. Moreover, as already observed above, many of them were in or had been in the possession of the great families and in religious houses as well. Few copies had the heretical prologue and there was nothing to connect them with Wyclif.

If they are not the ones seen by More, how is it that these Catholic ones have vanished while the others have survived, and in some cases

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with a heretical prologue? These Wyclifite Bibles therefore, shorn of their prologue, eventually found their way into Catholic households and thus came to be accepted as Catholic Bibles (*cf.* Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*). As Gasquet has pointed out, whether Wyclifite or not, the fact remains that Catholics did then possess English Bibles without interference from authority, and these Bibles now regarded as Wyclifite were in pre-Reformation days uniformly regarded as perfectly orthodox by undoubtedly loyal sons of Mother Church (*cf.* *Old English Bible*, p. 161).

PAROCHUS

CATHOLIC ENGLISH BIBLIOGRAPHY OF GENERAL QUESTIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

INTRODUCTORY

This bibliography is intended to supplement that compiled by Dr A. Theissen, and published in *Scripture*, II (1947), 116-18 and III (1948), 27-9, 59-61. It comprises works published since 1947 and other material, chiefly articles in periodicals, not included in the previous list.

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BOOK REVIEW

La Sainte Bible, Editions du Cerf, Paris 1953 : (1) *Acts*, ed. and tr. Dom J. Dupont, o.s.b., with intr. by Canon Cerfaux. Pp. 224. Fr. 630. (2) *Galatians and Romans*, ed. and tr. Père Lyonnet, s.j. Pp. 136. Fr. 390. (3) *Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum*, ed. and tr. Prof. George, s.m. Pp. 96. Fr. 285. (4) *Amos and Hosea*, ed. Canon Osty, p.s.s. Pp. 128. Fr. 390. (5) *Judith and Esther*, ed. Prof. Barucq, s.d.b. Pp. 132. Fr. 420.

It is with much pleasure that we have received fresh instalments of this series, which is so well calculated to spread a more accurate knowledge of Holy Writ among the many millions of Catholics who have a working knowledge of the French language, together with a reasonable grounding in their religion. The fascicles should prove of especial value to all priests and religious, as well as to the educated laity. The whole collection is being published under the direction of the Ecole Biblique at Jerusalem, supported by a large number of biblical scholars among the secular and regular clergy. In general, the get-up of the books is good, but it seems a mistake to have a letter of the alphabet put against each word of the text upon which (taken alone or with others) there is a note ; added to the numbers of the verses, also inserted, this arrangement somewhat disfigures the text. The ordinary method of prefixing the number of the verse to each comment upon it seems quite adequate.

The five parts of the Cerf edition just received fall into three groups. The first may be called Pauline, since it contains *Acts*, and *Galatians and Romans*. St Luke, having finished his gospel, passes on in *Acts* to Sts Peter and Paul, setting forth the gradual spread of the Gospel from Palestine and Syria to Asia Minor, the Aegean and Rome, where both are martyred ; but it is St Paul that he has mainly in view, mentioning him first as a bitter opponent of St Stephen. Proper attention is given to the two main forms of text in *Acts* (pp. 31-2). Perhaps St Paul's appeal to Rome (xxv.10) might have been explained more clearly. Festus was a well-meaning but rather weak governor. Paul had no mind to be left at the mercy of the Jews, like Stephen and Christ Himself ; his appeal as a Roman citizen was an ousting of jurisdiction, so that only the emperor or his representatives at Rome had now any right to try him. St Luke ends *Acts* almost upon a note of triumph ; though still in confinement, St Paul was able to see all who came to him, and in this sense to teach "without hindrance".

Galatians and *Romans* were written about the same time and essentially upon the same theme, but the former, with strong feeling and under a sense of crisis, to a Pauline church, the latter more as a careful theological treatise to a church which Paul had never yet visited, but which he is longing to see and which he treats with profound respect. The two epistles, but especially *Romans*, are still of considerable importance in dealing with Protestantism, as far as Protestantism can be said to hold anything like a definite and dogmatic faith, and Père Lyonnet offers a good summary of St Paul's argument.

The second group deals with five of the minor prophets : Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum in one part, with Amos and Hosea in the other. When all the minor prophets have been published in this series (and also in the Westminster Version, in which only Hosea, Joel and Amos have still to appear), a vital and somewhat neglected part of the Old Testament will be far more accessible to the intelligent reader than before, though we shall still wish that these prophets had illustrated their background more fully ; Hosea's marriage, it may be mentioned, is taken quite historically, as a symbol of the mutual relations of Jehovah and Israel.

And lastly, "*place aux dames*". The two biblical heroines Judith and Esther raise several questions. (1) Are these books canonical ? More difficulties were raised against *Judith* than against *Esther*, but the Council of Trent put a final end to all controversy on the subject. (2) Have we a reliable text of the books ? The textual differences are considerable, and much work still remains to be done upon them before we can recover (in the main) a quite certain text. (3) Are the books historical ? The Biblical Commission (1905) laid it down that books which are considered historical are not to be explained in any other way without solid arguments concerning the purpose of the writer. In the case of these two books such solid arguments do not appear to be lacking, and the editor seems justified in his cautious preference for the view that strictly historical narratives are not intended, though there are various suggestions of historical backgrounds.

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